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ABSTRACT

The faculty at an urban school serving prekindergarten through fifth grade were concerned about poor teacher performance on an area of the Texas Teacher Appraisal System (TTAS) that assessed their ability to present information accurately and to explain content and/or learning tasks clearly. Responding to their concern, this document describes an inservice workshop designed to improve teacher performance in those areas. Literature on effective schools is reviewed, other methods of improving teachers' instructional effectiveness are mentioned, and time and cost requirements for the inservice are given. Also described is the inservice content, which includes six categories: (1) performance goals; (2) rationale for performance goals; (3) teacher knowledge and behavior; (4) schedule of learning activities; (5) staff development resources; and (6) teacher audience. Next, the organization, delivery systems and techniques, governance structure, and evaluation of the inservice are described. Included are an outline of the inservice; five nonfacilitating behaviors; a TTAS checklist for content presentation; five aspects of clarity; and a list of "Things I Still Need to Learn." (9 references) (CLA)

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PRESENTING INFORMATION ACCURATELY AND CLEARLY

An inservice workshop based upon the Texas Teacher Appraisal System (TTAS)

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A presentation developed for November 1990

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT/INSERVICE PROJECT

1. NATURE OF THE PROBLEM:

School X is a priority school in an urban school district. The school serves Pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade. The faculty is composed of forty teachers with an ethnic distribution equal to the school population which is 70% Hispanic, 20% Black, and 10% Anglo.

Teacher performance on the TTAS has been above average except on Domain III, criterion 7: Presents information accurately and clearly; specifically on indicator b: explains content and/or learning tasks clearly. Up to 70% of the teachers have been denied credit within the past three years. The administrative staff has provided a few examples of this indicator but no consistent method of intervention has occurred. The faculty has requested a formal in-service training program from the administrative staff, so that the teachers' performance on this particular indicator can improve.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND RESEARCH:

Effective school literature highlights a set of factors which positively correlate with student gains in achievement. One of these factors concerns academically rich programs, which focus on "students actively engaging in learning through tasks that capitalize on their personal experiences" (Ortiz, 1988). Any in-service training should be tailored to fit specific needs of the

faculty. Opportunities to share and emulate teaching strategies should be provided.

Research on teaching reveals that a degree of variety, (along with clarity and enthusiasm) is important for maintaining student interest and attention and ultimately for producing higher achievement (Rosenshine and Furst, 1973). Systematic use of a variety of techniques produces better results promoting student achievement. Effective teachers are clear in the presentation of content while being enthusiastic and using a variety of instructional techniques which elicit and maintain students' attention (Emmer, Evertson, and Anderson, 1980).

As Good and Brophy (1987) state, clarity in the teacher's presentation is essential if students are to understand concepts and work assignments. They go on to ask, does the teacher communicate the objectives of the lesson clearly? Do lectures begin without introduction or end without summaries, lack organization to provide structure and highlight main points, or otherwise lack sufficient clarity to enable students to follow them without confusion? Providing a clear introduction and a strong summary takes little planning and presentation time, but it can make a big difference in the degree to which students remember essential facts and concepts (Luiten, Ames, & Ackerson, 1970; Schuck, 1981). Therefore before lecturing, teachers should tell students what they will be expected to learn from the lecture and

why it is important for them to know this information (Good & Brophy, 1987).

Teacher explanations of content must be understandable, steps must be explained, examples of completed work must be provided, areas of difficulty must be identified, and previous directions must be clarified. Clarity is achieved through the use of relevant examples, step by step explanation, appropriate response to students' questions, demonstration of how to do the work, student practice, allowance of time for student thinking after explanation, statement of expectations and objectives and logical presentation. (Hines, Cruickshank, and Kennedy, 1985).

Joyce and Weil (1980) describe 23 different approaches to teaching, which are classified into four families or orientations known as information processing, social interaction, focus on the individual person, and behavior modification. Each approach has its own individual merit, so it would be a mistake for a teacher to adopt any single approach exclusively. Many things are learned more easily when sequenced in an optimal way and taught directly by the teacher through the use of different instructional techniques.

Rosenshine (1983) discusses how effective teachers present material in small steps. He states that teachers will get better results by breaking the lesson down into "bite-size chunks". He also recommends that the pace be brisk, many examples used, and

detailed explanations be provided as well. Rosenshine advocates asking a variety of questions, from simple fact/recall, to those that involve application and analysis.

Rosenshine also recommends "over learning" which involves much practice and repetition. This is necessary for elementary school instruction. Success rates in classrooms were greater where students had "over learned" a particular concept. Student responses became automatic and it was apparent that the teacher spent less time on remediation activities and actually more on lesson instruction.

In conclusion, in order to provide effective instruction teachers need to be clear and concise in their statements, periodically making sure that all students are on task and understanding what they are doing.

3. ALTERNATIVES TO SOLVING THE PROBLEM:

Some alternatives that have been proposed include monthly mini-workshops addressing this specific indicator, videotapes of the correct model for this indicator, university course work, use of mentor teachers, and peer brainstorming sessions.

4. TIME NEEDED:

Since this indicator has been consistently identified as a weakness, the timelines should include a monthly intervention approach, be it a formalized in-service session or handy tips from the principal to strengthen this area. A full year should be devoted.

5. COST TO DELIVER SERVICES:

Administration should invest some instructional funds ($50.00 - $200.00) to provide materials and incentive rewards for the faculty.

6. OUTLINE OF CONTENT:

A. Performance Goals:

Goals will focus on the improvement of Criterion 7- Presents information accurately and clearly. Indicator b: explains content and/or learning tasks clearly. Teachers will be able to achieve clarity through the use of relevant examples, repetition, step by step explanation, demonstration, and student practice. The 70% of teachers who were denied credit will be able to achieve credit by the third evaluation of the school year. In regards to the students 95% will pass the reading, writing, and math subtests of the TEAMS.

B. Rationale For Performance Goals:

The main rationale for the above goals is the improvement of the instructional quality of the school. In this manner, student achievement and teacher effectiveness can be holistically addressed. The priority school's effectiveness is being measured yearly by the central office; they are quite aware of a possible weakness in the educational chain, be it administrator or teacher based. The above goals would improve the faculty's mode of imparting information through the use of relevant examples,

repetition, step by step explanation, demonstration, and student practice. Overall school performance would be affected positively in all subject areas.

C. Teacher Knowledge and Behavior:

Teachers will exhibit an overall improvement in attitude since they will be involved in the actual preparation of the in-service process. Their particular needs assessment issues in this domain area will be addressed. The administrators will empower their teachers to summon up educational and community resources, be it sharing of up to date research in the area of content, or use of parent volunteers in a particular demonstration. In such a way former behaviors will be replaced by new invigorating teaching procedures which in turn will lead to higher TTAS scores and increased benefits. The procedures will also lead to an increased number of EQ's due to the abundance of teaching strategies presented.

D. Schedule of Learning Activities:

Activities will be scheduled initially at monthly faculty meetings in thirty minute segments. A weekly teaching strategy will be outlined in the principal's bulletin. After three months, videotapes will be available in the library to supplement the faculty meetings.

E. Staff Development Resources:

A minimal use of instructional funds will be applied as incentives (prize money for creative content teaching idea, special class awards for the grade level who makes the most improvement). Primarily, the office will develop a workbook which will compile all the monthly presentations and be kept at the priority school.

F. Teacher Audience:

The teachers involved teach Pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade at a priority school.

7. ORGANIZATIONAL CONTENT:

The content will specifically address the use of relevant examples, repetition, step by step explanation, demonstration, and student practice. Each area will be described in detail and will include examples of EQ's also. The teachers will be grouped by grade level, and special areas. Specific concerns per grade level and subject will be addressed.

8. DELIVERY SYSTEMS/TECHNIQUES:

These indicators will be incorporated into the natural classroom situations via the monthly in-service session. They can be addressed through the use of incentives, handouts, videotapes, brainstorming sessions, correlation with TEAMS objectives and essential elements.

9. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE:

A grade level needs assessment for Domain III, Criterion 7-b, will be reviewed. Teachers will be encouraged to observe other teachers on campus and review possible goals as a whole. Modeling behaviors, clarifying behavior, student practice rationale, and grouping patterns will also be addressed.

10. EVALUATION:

Administration will utilize a concise monthly survey form which will cover each in-service to garner its effectiveness. A suggestion box for teachers will be used to keep current on all concerns. TEAMS scores in reading, math, and writing by grade level will also chart effectiveness.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING

I. SCENARIO OF INSERVICE

II. GOALS OF INSERVICE
- A. EXPLANATION OF DOMAIN III- PRESENTATION OF SUBJECT MATTER- INDICATOR 7B: EXPLAINS CONTENT AND/OR LEARNING TASKS CLEARLY
- B. TEACHING STRATEGIES WHICH STRESS CLARITY
- C. INCREASED CREDIT ON TTAS AND EQ'S GALORE

III. CONTENT- CLARITY
- A. STEP BY STEP
- B. REPETITION
- C. RELEVANT EXAMPLES
- D. STUDENT PRACTICE
- E. WAIT TIME
- F. LOGICAL PRESENTATION

IV. TEACHING MODEL #1- "NOT ENOUGH STUFF"

V. TEACHING MODEL #2- "JUST THE RIGHT STUFF"

VI. REVIEW

VII. EPILOGUE

NONFACILITATING BEHAVIORS

1. Insufficient wait time.

2. Rapid reward terminates further thinking,
   instead encourage students to dialogue, discuss, critique
   answers.

3. Programmed answer, instead have willingness to listen.

4. Nonspecific feedback question,
   instead say, "Let's think of some examples, situations . . ."
   vs. "Who doesn't understand this?"

5. Fixation at a low level of questions such as informational level,
   instead encourage analysis of concepts, complex relationships,
   level of new data.

Gross, B. (1979). Teaching Under Pressure. Santa Monica, California:
Goodyear Publishing Co.

TTAS CHECKLIST FOR CONTENT PRESENTATION

1. The teacher presents lessons that are appropriate for the ability level of his/her students.

2. The teacher demonstrates adaptability in adjusting lesson plans to meet the individual needs of his/her students.

3. The teacher has a firm grasp of the cognitive organization of the subject matter, and demonstrates skill in the sequencing of learning tasks.

4. The teacher has the ability to use multilevel questioning based upon different cognitive levels in order to stimulate critical thinking.

5. The teacher is able to look at his/her learning environment (relevant activities, student interests).

6. The teacher is able to use alternative approaches (collaborative learning, guided practice, reteach, higher order thinking skills, etc.)

7. The teacher asks questions (promotes development of conceptual abilities, analytical techniques and synthesis of ideas).

FIVE ASPECTS OF CLARITY

1. UNDERSTANDING: Prerequisite to clarity, involves matching the information to be learned to the learner's present knowledge.

2. STRUCTURING: Involves organizing the material to promote a clear presentation:
   - stating the purpose
   - reviewing main ideas
   - providing transitions between sections

3. SEQUENCING: Involves arranging the information in an order conducive to learning, typically by gradually increasing the difficulty or complexity of the material.

4. EXPLAINING: Refers to explaining principles and relating them to facts through examples, illustrations, or analogies.

5. PRESENTING: Refers to volume, pacing, articulation, and other speech mechanics.

McCaleb, J., & White, J. (1980). Critical dimensions in evaluating teacher clarity. *Journal of Classroom Interaction, 15*, 27-30.

DOMAIN III

PRESENTATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

CRITERION 7-B

EXPLAINS CONTENT/TASK(S) CLEARLY

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTION

RELEVANT EXAMPLES

DEMONSTRATION

STUDENT PRACTICE

WAIT TIME

REPETITION

THINGS I STILL NEED TO LEARN

TO TALK LESS AND LISTEN MORE;

TO KNOW THE NAME OF EVERY KID IN ALL MY CLASSES;

TO APPRECIATE GOOD IDEAS WHEN THEY AREN'T EXPRESSED

GRAMMATICALLY OR SPELLED CORRECTLY;

TO NOT BE INFLUENCED BY HOW PRETTY OR CLEAN A KID IS

BUT TO PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT HE IS INSIDE.

TO GIVE MORE ATTENTION TO AFFECTIVE GOALS EVEN THOUGH

EVERYONE'S EMPHASIZING COGNITIVE AREAS.

TO REALIZE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING A TEACHER CAN DO

IS HELP A KID FEEL HE'S GLAD HE IS WHO HE IS.

Gross, B. (1979). Teaching Under Pressure. Santa Monica, California: Goodyear Publishing Co.

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